

UNITED STATES SPECIFICATION

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT I, JEAN-MARC DUBOIS , a citizen of Switzerland, residing at Augraben 2-4, CH-5620 Bremgarten, Switzerland, have invented certain new and useful improvements in a

COLLAPSIBLE STORAGE AND TRANSPORT CONTAINER

of which the following is a specification.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Applicant claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119 of German Application No. 102 51 744.4 filed November 5, 2002.

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a collapsible storage and transport container made of plastic.

2. The Prior Art

A collapsible storage and transport container is known, for example, from DE 295 00 992 U1. In the container described there, the crosswise side walls are connected with the top end frame in articulated manner, so that when the container is set up, they automatically fall into the upright position, but must then be fastened in place in the bottom region, using force.

Since valuable and/or sensitive goods must sometimes be transported in such containers, particularly in the industrial sector, these containers must also be provided with a security device that prevents the containers from being opened by unauthorized persons.

This is done, in the case of the known container, by means of latches that can be activated counter to a spring force, but these do not necessarily provide protection against manipulation.

Furthermore, the handling of such containers, particularly when collapsing them, is complicated.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to structure a container of this type so that manipulations of the closure security device are made difficult and handling of the container is also facilitated.

In accordance with the invention, these and other objects are achieved by providing a collapsible storage and transport container in which the crosswise side walls are mounted in the region of the bottom of the container, in articulated manner, and are provided with devices for fastening them in place with a positive lock, at their free top edges on the top end frame which is connected with the side walls.

The essential novelty of the container according to the invention can therefore be seen in that the crosswise side walls flap down onto the bottom when the container is collapsed, thereby facilitating handling of the container during the collapsing process.

In this connection, it is particularly advantageous if, in accordance with a preferred embodiment, at least one tab is provided on the free top edges of the crosswise side walls, which tab can be fastened in place in the top end frame, with a positive lock, in a recess that is complementary to this tab.

When the container is set up into its operating position, the tab(s) on the crosswise side walls thereby come(s) to rest in the corresponding recesses in the top end frame, and in this position, measures can be taken so that a positive-lock connection between the tabs and the container comes about.

This is done, in a first variant embodiment, by structuring the tab essentially in cylindrical shape. In this embodiment, the tab in the upright position of the crosswise side wall, projects beyond the recess in the top end frame so that the projecting part of the tab of one of

the crosswise side walls projects into a recess on the underside of a lid that closes the container, while the projecting part of the tab of the opposite crosswise side wall rests against a ridge formed on the underside of the lid.

In this way, the result is achieved that the lid not only closes the container and makes the contents inaccessible, but also, the previously mentioned positive-lock connection between the tab and the container comes about.

In a second variant embodiment, the tab is structured essentially in cylindrical shape and, in the upright position of the crosswise side wall, projects beyond the holder in the top end frame so that the projecting part of the tab projects into a recess in the bottom of a container that is set onto the container and has the same construction as this container.

This second container thereby closes the first container, so that either this second container can be closed with the lid described above, or another container is set onto the second container. This third container is then closed with a lid.

For reasons of stability, it is provided, according to a further embodiment, that two tabs are provided at each crosswise side wall.

To increase the security against unauthorized opening of the container according to the invention, it is provided, according to a further embodiment, that a projection that projects outward at a right angle is provided at the free top edge of the crosswise side walls, in each instance. Each projection can be inserted through a respective complementary slit in the top end frame, and can be locked in place there by means of a lead seal.

In this connection, it is provided, in particularly advantageous manner, according to a further embodiment, that bores that align with one another are present for the wire of the lead seal, not only in the lid but also in the top end frame and in the projection. Raised nubs are provided to the right and the left of the bore, in the lid, on its underside, which nubs correspond with corresponding depressions in the top end frame.

By means of the bores that align with one another, the result is assured that a connection between the lid, the crosswise side wall, and the top end frame will come about by

means of the wire of the lead seal or an insertable lead seal. The nubs provided on the underside of the lid come into engagement with the corresponding depressions, so that self-centering of the lid takes place, on the one hand, and securing of its position takes place, on the other hand. This also makes it possible to absorb crosswise forces to relieve stress on the lead seal.

In order to securely attach the lid on the container according to the invention, it is provided, according to a further embodiment, that slit-shaped recesses are provided in the top end frame, which is structured as a hollow profile, into which recesses the locking tabs that are provided at the underside of the lid can be inserted.

One possible attachment of the lid in these slit-shaped recesses is provided by a further embodiment. In this embodiment, the locking tabs are structured in hook shape, so that they can be inserted vertically into the slits in the top end frame and, after the lid has been shifted horizontally, they engage under the top wall of the end frame.

In this connection, the ridge mentioned in the first variant embodiment discussed previously is structured as a

slanted plane, at least in parts, so that when the lid is lowered into the slit-shaped recesses, and when it is moved horizontally, the tabs present on the crosswise side walls move into the corresponding recesses, on the one hand, and the tabs of the opposite crosswise side wall come to rest in front of this slanted plane, on the other hand.

This causes the lid to sit immovably on the container even before a lead seal is applied.

According to a further embodiment, the top end frame has a lower shoulder that points into the interior of the container, on its sides assigned to the crosswise side walls, in which shoulder the opening(s) that is/are open towards the interior of the container, to hold the tab(s), is/are arranged.

This arrangement has several advantages. First this arrangement makes it possible for additional tabs to be molded onto the lid, in the insertion direction, on the front, which can move into corresponding recesses in the top end frame, above the shoulder. Second, this arrangement improves the stackability of the containers, since the containers in question generally have a design of the bottom in which the bottom edge region is also structured in

shoulder shape. This means that this edge region sits on the top end frame, while the remaining bottom region projects into the container interior of the container arranged underneath it.

In a lid variant, recesses may be provided in the free top edge of the crosswise side walls, which correspond with tabs that project from the lid edges at a right angle. In this way, after the crosswise side walls are set upright, the lid is set onto the container so that the tabs penetrate into the recesses, which also causes a positive-lock connection to come about. The method of securing the lid results from what has already been said.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in connection with the accompanying drawings. It should be understood, however, that the drawings are designed for the purpose of illustration only and not as a definition of the limits of the invention.

In the drawings,

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a container in the operating position (in a partially sectional view).

Fig. 2 shows a container according to Fig. 1 with the crosswise side wall half upright (in a partially sectional view).

Fig. 3 shows a container according to Fig. 2 in a cut-open view.

Fig. 4 shows an embodiment of a crosswise side wall.

Fig. 5 shows a top part of the crosswise side wall with lid.

Fig. 6 shows an embodiment of a crosswise side wall with top end frame.

Fig. 7 shows an embodiment of a crosswise side wall and lengthwise side wall with top end frame and lid set on.

Fig. 8 shows an embodiment of a crosswise side wall and lengthwise side wall with top end frame.

Fig. 9 shows an embodiment of a lid in a view from the bottom right side.

Fig. 10 shows an embodiment of a lid in a view from the bottom left side.

Fig. 11 shows a variant of a lid (view from the top).

Fig. 12 shows a lid according to Fig. 11 (view from the bottom).

Fig. 13 shows a closed container with lid according to Fig. 11.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Turning now in detail to the drawings, Figs. 1 and 2 show a collapsible container according to the invention indicated, in general, with the reference symbol 1. Container 1 has a bottom 2 and a top end frame 3. Side walls 5 that can be folded into the interior of the container about an axis 4 are mounted, in articulated manner, on the top end frame 3, on the one hand, and on the bottom 2, on the other hand, so that they can be folded up and down.

The container is completed by two crosswise side walls 6, which are structured in one piece, and are structured to fold into the interior of the container about axes arranged in the bottom region 7.

A lid 8 serves to close container 1. On its top side, lid 8 has a rib 9 that runs around the circumference, which rib is interrupted at 10. The interruptions 10 serve as a holder for a belt for locking the container(s).

As is evident from Figure 2, but more clearly from Figures 3 and 4, tabs 11 are molded onto the top edge of the crosswise side walls 6, which are introduced into corresponding recesses 12 in the top end frame 3. Tabs 11 project beyond a shoulder 13 that is formed in top end frame 3, so that the free end of tab 11 lies in the plane that passes through top end frame 3.

In addition to tabs 11, a projection 14 that projects outward at a right angle is molded onto crosswise side wall 6, and a bore 15 is provided in it.

As is evident from Figure 5, this bore 15 aligns with a bore 16 in the edge region of the lid 8.

As is evident in Figure 6, corresponding bores 17 are also provided in the top end frame.

In Figure 7, it is shown how the positive-lock connection of tab 11 comes about. Tab 11 is taken into a recess 18 by the lid 8 being set on. These recesses 18 are shown more clearly in Figure 9, which shows the underside of a crosswise side of the lid. Recesses 18 are structured in pocket shape and thereby correspond with the hook-shaped top of the tab 11, which is clearly evident from Figure 8. In Figure 8, slit-shaped recesses 19 are also shown in top edge region of the top end frame 3. The slit-shaped recesses 19 correspond with hook-shaped locking tabs 20 on the underside of lid 8. Other recesses 21 are provided on the crosswise sides of top end frame 3, which correspond with latches 22, which are arranged on the side of lid 8 on which pocket-shaped recesses 18 are also located.

As is evident from Figure 10, the opposite crosswise side of lid 8 is structured differently than the side shown in Figure 9.

Instead of the pocket-shaped recesses 18, here only a ridge 23 is provided, which has wedge-shaped regions 24 that

correspond with the tabs 11 of the opposite crosswise side wall 6 in the assembled state.

Finally, it is evident from Figure 10 that next to the bore 16, raised nubs 25 are molded into lid 8, which correspond with recesses 26 in top end frame 3 (see Figure 6).

In order to bring container 1 into its' operating position, the lengthwise sides 5 are first brought into their upright position. Afterwards, the two crosswise side walls 6 are brought into their upright position, so that the tabs 11 move into the corresponding recesses in top end frame 3. Then the lid 8 is set onto the top end frame 3 so that the hook-shaped tabs align with the slit-shaped recesses 19. In this position, the lid is moved vertically downward, so that the hooks 20 penetrate into the recesses 19. In this connection, the lid is shifted horizontally, at the same time, so that the hook-shaped projections of the locking tabs 20 move under the top horizontal wall of the top end frame 3, which is structured as a hollow frame, and at the same time, the pocket-shaped recesses 18 move over the hook-shaped ends of the tabs 11, and furthermore, the latches 22 penetrate into the corresponding recesses 21 of the top end frame 3.

In this connection, the nubs 25 also come into engagement with the corresponding recesses 26, so that now lid 8 is securely seated on container 1. The wire of a lead seal is then drawn through bores 15, 16, and 17.

Alternatively, instead of lid 8, a container with the same construction can also be set onto open container 1, so that the positive-lock connection comes about with tabs 11 and recesses 27 in the shoulder-shaped bottom region 2 (Figure 1).

In this manner, several containers 1 can be stacked one above the other, so that the uppermost container 1 is then closed with lid 8. Belts can then be tightened around the entire set of containers, through recesses 10.

In Figure 11, an alternative lid is shown. Here, lid 8 has tabs 40 that point downward at its edges. Otherwise, this lid corresponds to the embodiments described above, in its structure. In Figure 12, these tabs 40 are shown once again, in more detail.

In Figure 13, a cut-open container is shown, in which the crosswise side wall is set upright. There are recesses

41 in the crosswise side wall 6, into which tabs 40 of the lid 8 submerge.

Accordingly, while a few embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it is to be understood that many changes and modifications may be made thereunto without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims.